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AUTHOR Lockett, Gretchen C.
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ABSTRACT

Historically black colleges and universities (HBCU's) and predominantly black colleges and universities (PBCU's) have an opportunity to empower their students and their institutions to develop "beloved communities" in which to exhibit innovations in human interactions and economic self-sufficiency. In this model, campuses would be used as research laboratories operating as "beloved communities" wherein microcosmic solutions to macrocosmic problems are developed. Steps in the empowerment of black universities and the nation include: (1) recognize that the throes of economic change are so drastic that social institutions have been decimated and are in need of redefinition and empowerment; (2) redefine social institutions using a credit model based on function and effect; (3) redefine the "American Dream" to prepare students for leadership roles in the work world they will face; (4) develop "work colleges" so that students work in college enterprises and graduate without debt; (5) empower churches in African American communities to be outreach centers for children; and (6) teach the values of inclusion, tolerance, excellence, persistence, decency, honor, and nonviolence. (JDD)

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EMPOWERMENT IN HBCU'S AND PBCU'S: DEVELOPING MICROCOSMS OF THE BELOVED COMMUNITY THROUGH THE RE-DEFINITION OF SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND THE LEARNING AND APPLICATION OF VALUES

by

Gretchen C. Lockett, Ph. D.
Associate Professor of Education
Harris-Stowe State College

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The purpose of this paper is to highlight and discuss what may well be the most unique opportunity for social contribution that the historically and predominantly black colleges and universities have had in some time. Due to our history of being able to achieve more successes with less resources than are said to be necessary for effective educational endeavors, and due to the fact that currently and in the future all Americans will be faced with the challenges of shrinking resources, we, in the HBCU's and PBCU's, have an opportunity to develop new models and definitions of social institutions which will help our communities and our nation to approach the new century as victors rather than as victims, as participants and leaders rather than as spectators.

Our empowerment efforts then should include an effort to advance the development of moral reasoning, democratic values, understanding of community, and economic development at early ages in our students to enable them to participate effectively in the multifaceted, innovative and creative solutions needed for the challenges we face. We want to continue our traditional mission which is to empower our institutions and constituencies, especially our students, to accept the true meaning of leadership by creating new knowledge and having this new knowledge manifest itself at new levels of community. But we also want to empower our institutions for what may be a more important non-traditional role which is the demonstration of the development of a nonviolent army in operation as "the beloved community" which exhibits innovations in human interactions and economic self-sufficiency.

In order to establish a working definition of empowerment it might be asked if

empowerment is help or assistance or more? When help or assistance are provided and the helper or the assistant move on, what happens to the helpee? Perhaps the word empowerment means help -- plus assistance --plus practice -- plus development -- plus growth so that soon, the helpee does not require assistance of the helper. This formula would have the net effect of enabling and thereby empowering. It would seem that the intent of the process of empowerment is to enable the victim to develop power, and concomitantly, efficacy through proactive development.

NAFEO's past and current commitment to the empowerment of its member institutions and their able and steadfast presidents is well documented. NAFEO's efforts have seen new connections of its members to some of the systemic benefits and rewards to which the majority institutions have had access historically. Our students, faculties, staffs and alumni have become privy to new linkages, networks and resources.

Historically, HBCU's have educated their students in the knowledge of their professions and through subtle mentoring have taught them that in order to practice those professions in the mainstream they might have to apply effective social change methodologies. In the 1960's, because of its belief in the integrity of democratic values, the African American community, led by students from many HBCU campuses, some famous graduates of these institutions and many other supporters, challenged and revolutionalized the social institutions of this nation with nonviolent social change which included direct action and the law.

Many of us who were actively involved in effecting these changes, just as actively

press for the continuance of connectedness between our campuses and communities, now, more than ever, in need of new models. Toward that end, at the 1983 NAFEO conference, through my colleague Dr. Robert Ethridge, I presented a paper entitled "A Developing Model to Save Our Children". More and more African Americans, in academe have been developing location specific and national models toward the same ends. Our communities are in such a state of crisis now, that we seem to have many persons ready to act to save not only African American children, but all children, not just African American communities, but all communities in our society. This presentation today is an attempt to add another perspective to this genre of community development models. It is directed toward using our campuses as research laboratories operating as "beloved communities" wherein we develop microcosmic solutions to macrocosmic problems.

Our HBCU's and PBCU's may be the fulcrums of power and empowerment of America. If we are able to harness and focus this energy, we will develop our students and institutions to their fullest potentials. From our campuses, through our faculty, students, staff and alumni, new models and their applications should be developed and the results documented with research and shared through publications for our learned colleagues and for the general public. We can become empowered and we can empower.

The role of the HBCU's and PBCU's is to produce leaders, thinkers, professionals and models for communities which are at "the cutting edge" and establish new "cutting edges". Many observers of our institutions know that we can do the job and

are counting on us to do it. Many corporations, governmental agencies, politicians and practitioners have recognized that the HBCU's and PBCU's of NAFEO are the stepping stones toward the establishment of the "beloved community". They know that despite insurmountable odds, we have continued to educate and graduate, uplift and motivate students, who, without us, may easily have dropped out, stopped out and joined the growing ranks of the alienated, displaced and "thrown away" youth of the evening news.

The twenty-first century will find our institutions and other institutions of higher education still faced with such problems as inadequate faculty salaries, the need for more scholarship and endowment monies, the desire to raise academic standards, and the need to increase recruitment and retention efforts. While our struggles with these problems will not be unique, to be sure our solutions will be.

Empowerment can mean an opportunity for substantial contributions to history for our 117 NAFEO institutions during these next six years. For our institutions which have teacher education and urban education programs it can mean an even greater opportunity. Our schools and colleges are uniquely suited to addressing the myriad problems of the imminent twenty-first century because of our African American heritage. The African American community has never experienced fully "the American Dream" nor believed it possible. Scarcity of resources has always been the nature of life for African Americans. Thus, as current issues point to the "shrinking" of the "American Dream" we do not experience the same levels of psychic or philosophical conflict that many Americans in the majority communities face. In other words, if we

are not "in the black", we don't"see red".

The model presented here is very basic and can be stated in a few sentences. The ethical and moral values of the beloved community as well as democratic values should be taught. Students should be prepared for the realism of the economic world of tomorrow. New ways of financing education should be sought. HBCU'S and PBCU'S should reach out to the surrounding communities.

The first contribution our institutions can make to the empowerment of ourselves and the nation is to define the problem more clearly and quickly. The problem stated simply is that we are in the throes of economic change so drastic that the social institutions of the society have been decimated and are in need of re-definition and empowerment.

The fifty states in our union, to a greater or lesser degree, are changing from industrial to post-industrial entities. No longer can workers with limited education find work. No longer can some professionals find work. The economy is changing to a service economy and those who can provide services on an entrepreneurial basis will survive.

This drastic economic change is having political and social ramifications worldwide. In the U. S. the ramifications are manifested in the shattering of families and family values, the ineffectiveness of the schools, the loss of jobs and the work ethic, the abuse of drugs and alcohol, the limited reach of the church, the inability of the government to provide supports to ensure that the minimum standards of the American Dream can be met, and the loss of manufacturing business and other forms

of commerce.

Our second step in empowerment of ourselves, our institutions and our communities is to stop blaming ourselves for the destruction of the social institutions as we know them. We didn't do it. The changing economy in America and the world is the source of our problems. We cannot stop the change but we can try to work within our communities and world communities to help define the shape of the new economies. We can be proactive at home and abroad.

Next in our steps toward empowerment we must adopt the principle of KUJICHAGULIA (koo gee choc gu lia) from KWANZAA which refers to our need to define, name, create, and speak for ourselves. We need to redefine our social institutions using a credit model based on function and effect.

Historically our families, churches, schools, and businesses have been judged by majority standards and role models and always evaluated with a deficit viewpoint. Our families were said to be too extended, matriarchal, uneducated and poor for us to have success. Our schools were too overcrowded and our teachers too unchallenging to produce geniuses. Our churches were much too emotional, loud and busy to know and serve God.

Using our credit definition of family based on factors more than just the ability to achieve success and rewards in the market place, we recognize that in every endeavor we have been more extended, emotional, improvisational, survivalistic and resourceful. From our businesses to our churches and from our schools and colleges to our homes, we have had to take less, manage it better and do more. Most of the

time we have been so good at it that it has looked to all the world as if we have more fun and that we have more spiritual and rhythmic soul.

Another step in our empowerment is the definition of the new "American Dream" for ourselves and our students to enable them to go into the twenty-first century in a leadership role. We can better prepare our students for the work world they will face. By the year two thousand, our graduates who find jobs working for others will be in careers based on science, mathematics and high technology or in service industry jobs where information technology and human relations will be the primary skills. To the degree that we can keep the career paths to teaching open, we will be able to graduate and place our teacher education students. But most of our students, within five to ten years of graduation will be required to be self-employed with offices in their homes. Our time will be well spent in redefining education not in terms of what it used to be but in terms of what it needs to be.

In recent years African Americans and the society at large have learned a well kept secret of corporate America. Reflections on the theme of The Man In The Gray Flannel Suit remind us that the corporate world has not been all that satisfying for white America. The daily announcements of "downsizing", "rightsizing", and other corporate machinations have startled many Americans. It may be to our benefit psychically, that as African Americans we have had only one generation in corporations. It is probably safe to say that 50% of African Americans who were hired into corporations over the last thirty years are no longer there. They were caught in these "reductions in force" and instead of "40 acres and a mule" they received,

maybe $100,000, an early out, some stocks and a monthly retirement check at some point. Hopefully, they learned enough about business during their tenures that they can invest their resources as well as develop enterprises which will afford an income for them and their families.

The upshot of the recognition of these corporate changes is that no longer can we tell our students that they can be assured of jobs in corporations or anywhere else. Now we must empower our students by helping them to redefine work and by providing them business development opportunities through the enterprising efforts of our campuses. We must give them opportunities to develop small businesses and services so that they can be self sufficient after graduation. Concomitantly, we must develop our colleges and universities into "work-colleges" so that our students work in our college enterprises and businesses and graduate without debt. At least five institutions in the nation are doing this and providing such an effective model that they have garnered the support of corporations, their communities and have been developed creative uses of Title IV funds.

Students graduating from these "work colleges" leave their campuses with substantial work experience, commitment to the work ethic and no debt to the college or financial institutions. This work model was the model of our institutions historically when we had our farms and brick factories. Our empowerment efforts should include a return to a new form of this model.

Our colleges and institutions can help empower churches in African American communities by working with them to help our communities through Saturday

Academies and other models. Our campuses constitute educated constituencies which through volunteer work, internships and other configurations can help our churches to be outreach centers. We can bring ideas for curriculum, develop materials and programs and provide the technical skills that the churches need to do successful outreach in saving our children. We can help can help our churches with the re-definition of community and learning.

But, the central most important thing that we can do to empower our institutions, our students and our community is to teach the values of community. We must teach our students what "the beloved community" is and we must operationalize it on our campuses. We must make Dr. King's dream and ideological seeds of his "beloved community" as something toward which we work so that we can celebrate a new way of life each year on his birthday. We have to teach values to our students and we must practice and employ these values in our policies and actions on our campuses. We must develop nonviolence as a way of life on our campuses.

Three years ago, I participated in a research project funded by NEH to determine what black males aged 10 to 18 in Jacksonville, Florida thought were their problems and solutions. A series of five Saturday conferences were held in which these young men told us of their needs, rather than our telling them. The thing that they said to us that they needed, above and beyond anything else, was to be taught our values. They all agreed that this was the single most important need they had.

They told us that they did not value their lives, therefore they did not fear death; they did not value their abilities to freely move about and associate, therefore they did

not fear imprisonment. They said that they did not value education because they could not see where education had made a difference in our lives and thus, they could not see that it would make a difference in theirs. So they said unless we could teach them our values, they could not see how the quality of their lives could be improved.

Recent experiences have shown that there is a significant difference in the values of our college students and those of us who teach them. A "generation gap" between students and teacher is expected but many of our students articulate disbelief in values which may cause them to never develop as efficacious, self sufficient and contributing members of the American society.

In my American Government Survey classes, some African American students have told me that they have been taught by African American teachers that they should not learn and should totally disregard "The Pledge of Allegiance" and "The Preamble to The Constitution of The United States" because they were not written to include the African American. Additionally, these students have been taught and still adhere to the axiom of "never discuss politics and religion". This abdication of participation in our democratic republic is life-threatening for our communities.

Certainly, even Crispus Attucks knew that when the documents of this nation were written, our forefathers and foremothers were not considered as the intended beneficiaries of the new republicanism. African Americans at that time were not even considered to be human beings. We have fought through the courts and through many valiant efforts to have the documents, credos and processes of our nation become inclusive and for the nation to live up to the true meanings of the

words of the American social contract as presented in its documents.

Many of the students in my teacher education methods courses, some of whom are teacher's aides and substitute teachers, have similar non-participatory values and resultant alienation. Some subscribe to our values but have no knowledge of participation and efficacy in the democratic process. More often than not they articulate a level of long-suffering, un-mitigatable frustration.

Given this brief description of the state of values development and orientation, albeit based on my limited experiences, it may be that one of the primary venues for the empowerment of African American youth in the communities, general education college students, and teacher education students is values training and development. Without the development of values leading to morality and efficacy, our African American youth do not have a chance -- on or off campus.

Kohlberg in his stages of moral development advanced that most people do not develop abstract and universal principles of morality and therefore they are not able to operate cognitively and affectively at the level of morality necessary for society. If Kohlberg is correct then most persons will not develop the ability to participate in a democratic republic. The National Council of Social Studies cites "citizen participation in public life [as] essential to the health of our democratic system". The Council also states that "the main thrust of democratic beliefs and values is to guarantee the continuance of respect for human dignity and freedom" and lists certain "rights, freedoms, responsibilities and beliefs that embody many of the common values embraced by Americans" and articulated in our basic documents which state

the terms of our social contract as Americans.

The success of the ordinary American citizen is determined by the degree to which he or she is self-sufficient economically and socially, a contributing citizen, that is, votes or participates in community decisionmaking, exhibits socially accepted behavior, and is efficacious but also believes and supports the democratic and social customs of the country.

As HBCU's and PBCU's, much of our empowerment efforts should be devoted to vigorous programs of values clarification, development and training. This training should be curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular. Curricular models should include four year endeavors with components on values in freshmen orientation courses, chapels, convocations, sophomore research courses, junior courses and practicums in volunteerism, and senior seminars. Co-curricular efforts should include workshops, seminars, and other activities as a required part of organizational endeavors. Extra-curricular efforts would have required values sensitivity sessions and codes of behaviors. Brutality and barbarism should never be mistaken as demonstrations of brotherhood or sisterhood. Inclusion and tolerance, excellence and persistence, decency and honor should be the orders of the day.

One way to make such programs palatable and meaningful, is for us to begin to delineate and teach the values which are appropriate in "the beloved community" with our emphasis on the development of agape and nonviolence as a way of life. We can start this process in our respective classrooms and we can get our teacher education students to recognize that they can start in their classrooms. If we each

develop into active members of the nonviolent army, using agape and nonviolence as away of life within a short time we will see a difference in behaviors on our campuses and in our communities. As teachers and administrators we touch at least thirty students a semester who in turn touch thirty or more and so on down the line. By these efforts, although they are not macrocosmic, we will be changing the nature of the world. We will be empowering our students and our campuses by making "dreams" a reality. Our empowerment will cause a re-definition of the concept of power, nationally and internationally.

Our development of a new set of values for our youth will help them to become active and responsible for their own lives and for their communities. It is not only a philosophical approach but it is a practical approach. If we allow our youth to continue as alienated non-participants, they will begin to behave in socially unacceptable ways and more and more of them will wind up in mental institutions, penal institutions, and crack houses. The colleges and schools will have to teach the values because these institutions are probably the most stable social institutions in urban communities at this time. The colleges and schools, by their very nature, still have within them numbers of persons who support, subscribe to and exemplify the highest of human values. They should be called on to develop our campus models in this area.

Without values training, our efforts to empower our students through the development of entrepreneurships, cottage industries, and work colleges as espoused earlier in this document, will be less than successful.

In my methods classes, students are having to develop their definitions of "the beloved community" and to plan lessons on teaching classroom management and organization procedures that are based on agape and nonviolence as a way of life. Additionally they are required to develop thematic units, dealing with community issues, wrapping them in whole language and in integrated curricula. Within this context they develop an appreciation for connectedness, applied research, diversity and other academic and community values which have immediate applications. Other efforts to address the approach as presented in this document are underway.

We pray for our continued health, strength and persistence in these our empowerment efforts. At Harris-Stowe State College, we shall not get weary but shall be renewed and revitalized with every day.